

S E R M O N

Preach'd at

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St. Bartholomew's Church,

Before the

GOVERNORS and STEWARDS

OF

St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

July 26, 1733.

By GEORGE WATTS, A. M.

Publiſh'd at the particular Request of the GOVERNORS.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Richard Hett*, at the *Bible and Crown* in
the *Poultry*. MDCCXXXIII.

SEERMON

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Luke xii. 21.

So is he that layeth up Treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.

THE Meaning of these two opposite Terms *laying up Treasure for ourselves, and being rich towards God*, will be best understood by considering the former part of this Chapter, to which the Text has a Relation.

The Historian informs us, that as Jesus was instructing the People, one of the Company, either taking him for a Temporal Prince, who was to settle Right and Property amongst them; or judging from his excellent Doctrine, that he was some Person of unexceptionable Wisdom and Integrity, desires him to arbitrate Matters betwixt him and his Brother, to adjust the Shares of an Inheritance which had been left in common to them both: but the Brother it seems had unjustly seiz'd the whole to his own use; *Master, shew my Brother the injustice of his proceeding, and bid him divide with me the Inheritance.*

Such references as these to Men of unsuspected Probity and Honour, were very common among the Jews; they probably took their rise during the Time of their Captivity, when they were destitute of all Judicial Authority among themselves, and therefore

had no better way of composing their differences than by Arbitration. But be this as it will, Our Saviour, we find, was not willing to raise any prejudices against himself by officiously endeavouring to make this accommodation, He was not willing to give any suspicion to the secular Power, or any handle for the Accusation afterwards made against him, of invading the civil Authority: He therefore disowns any such jurisdiction as this; *who made me a Judge and Divider over you?* As if he had said, "There are Laws and Courts of Judicature establish'd, which will give sufficient Relief against such injustice, whose determinations I have no Authority to supersede. And tho I am indeed, a Teacher sent from God; tho the Rules of Life I prescribe, would, if duly observ'd, effectually secure to every Man, the quiet enjoyment of his just right; yet I will not personally intermeddle in these secular concerns: This is not agreeable to the character I bear, the design I was sent upon: My business is not judicially to determine Controversies betwixt particular Persons, but to give some general Instructions, which, if properly regarded, will root up the very Foundation of these disputes and contentions amongst Men."

Agreeable to this Character of himself, he raises from this very Circumstance, a most useful reflection for the Instruction of his Hearers: Since they could not but see from this Example before them, the evil Effects of a sordid covetous disposition. He takes occasion
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from hence to caution them against too great anxiety and solicitude after Riches, by representing how unable they are to furnish up a state of Tranquillity or Happiness in this Life, and yet all their Use and Benefit is confin'd to this Life only. *Take heed and beware of Covetousness, for a Man's Life, either its security or happiness, consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth.* This he proceeds to illustrate; by a familiar Parable of an unhappy Miser, whose desires always overgrew his Fortune; his riches cost him as much trouble in disposing of, as they had done at first in procuring, and every Addition of Substance, brought with it an Addition of Care. He represents this Man in that difficulty debating with himself what use he should make of the plenty he enjoy'd; *What shall I do that I have no room where to bestow my fruits?* Tho his affluence of fortune exceeded and could not be contain'd in his repositorys, and therefore were probably more than proportionable to his Condition, yet they were very far short of his desires; and the result of his solemn debate with himself was, not like a wise Man of the World, to enjoy the good Things he had acquir'd; not like a religious Man, to employ them in the relief of the necessitous, but only to pursue his gains, make his Barns more capacious to receive future products. *This I will do, I will pull down my Barns and build greater, till I have amass'd together so plentiful a provision for futurity, as shall put me out of the reach of Misfortune; then I will give myself up to enjoyment, I will say to my Soul, Soul, thou*

best much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. The manner of the Expression seems to intimate, as if he exulted in being the Contriver of so fine a Scheme, as if he was fond of his own Sagacity in consulting so prudently for his future happiness: But before the fancied Time of Enjoyment came, his vain expectations were blasted at once, and he expired under the sad reflexion of his own mind, for placing his confidence in such things, which by a double necessity, both of their frailty and our Mortality must soon desert us. *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be requir'd of thee, and then whose shall these things be that thou hast acquired? So is he that layeth up Treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God.* Such is the folly of the covetous Man.

By laying up treasure for ourselves, therefore we are not to understand the acquiring riches by any unlawful indirect means. The rich Man in the Parable is not represented as receiving this encrease of fortune by the Practice of fraud or injustice, but as the proper fruits of his Industry, the produce of his Lands. His covetousness seems to consist only in an over-sedulity in heaping together these worldly things, an over-tenaciousness in keeping them to himself useless and unprofitable, without dispensing any part of them with discretion and prudence, in acts of Charity to his fellow Creatures; this is the Temper which was the Rich Man's Folly condemn'd in the Text as absurd and ridiculous.

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Let me therefore, First, point out a notorious instance or two of the Covetous Man's Folly in thus laying up treasure for himself. And, Secondly, shew the true wisdom, the superior advantage of being rich towards God.

I take it for granted, that the Covetous Man proposes to furnish up a state of Happiness, by the good things of this World. Whether these are sufficient for such a purpose we need not at present enquire, but only remark, that he acts in such a manner, as to destroy that happiness he proposes, if these things were sufficient to furnish him with it. For whereas, according to his own scheme, he should rejoice in his abundance and make his Soul enjoy the good of all his Labour, he is so inconsistent with himself, so untrue to his own principles, that he is always only pushing his fortune, and enlarging his desires; the higher he climbs, the more his prospect is extended, every gain opens the Sense of some new want; like an over-curious Statuary, every Alteration he makes, every little Embelishment he adds to one part of the piece, makes others still necessary, that the whole may be uniform and compleat: so that the end of one Labour is to him only the introduction, the beginning of another, till Death at last comes into his relief, releases him from this revolution of fatigue, and closes his eyes and desires at the same time. The moment of enjoyment never comes, but as the wise Man describes him, *There is no end of his Labour,*
nor

*nor is his Eye newen satisfied with riches, neither
 saith he why do I bereave my Soul of good.* Again, as a farther instance of his folly, we find
 he generally perseveres in the pursuit of these worldly
 Advantages, notwithstanding all the disappointments
 he meets with, notwithstanding all the examples he
 every Day sees of their frailty and inconstancy, and
 in spite of all the notices of Mortality, the decays
 of Nature he finds within himself, which give him
 warning to desist. One would think indeed, that no-
 thing should so effectually teach him an indifference
 to the World, as the World itself; the mixture of trou-
 ble, disquiet, certain loss, and uncertain enjoyment,
 which embitters the happiest condition here, but yet
 thro' a strange infatuation, thro' an incorrigible fond-
 ness, the longer he has liv'd under the Sense of its
 imaginary pleasures and real evils, the more attach'd
 he is to it: Like a foolish admirer, the more he is
 abus'd, the more he is enamour'd with very cruelty and
 ill treatment; so that we find him heaping up treasure
 for many ages to come, at a season when he feels mor-
 tality in every Limb, and with a very childish affection
 doats as much upon the Toys of the World, as if he
 was but just entring upon Life. These are some of the infatuations which the Co-
 vetous Man betrays in his too eager pursuit of the
 riches and enjoyments of the World. — Neither the
 Time nor the Occasion will permit me to enlarge
 upon any more, but rather direct me to shew,

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2dly, The true wisdom, the superiour advantage
of the contrary practice, as 'tis express'd in the Text
by *being rich towards God*. This expression seems
to be perfectly the same with what is to be found in
other Authors, where persons who subscrib'd to the
carrying on a War or Merchandise, are said to be
rich * towards it, or in relation to it, upon ac-
count of the just title they have to a share in its ad-
vantages. In this Light it carries a just opposition to
that of laying up treasure for ourselves, and will ex-
press every thing which is contrary to the abuse or
misemployment of Riches, whether by keeping them
useless without allowing others any benefit from them,
or by wasting them in a vicious improper way.

By being rich then towards God, we may under-
stand the using that wealth which Providence has put
into our Hands, to carry on such good works as have
a tendency to fulfil his will, promote his glory and
the happiness of our Fellow Creatures, employing it
in all proper offices of Charity, relieving the distresses
of the poor, encouraging such undertakings as are pro-
per to advance the interest of religion, to keep up a
sense of Virtue and Goodness amongst Men. This
sort of good Actions, the Apostle by a like Expres-
sion to that of the Text calls *being rich in good works*,
upon Account of the just expectation, the assurance
which a Man has of receiving a proportionable reward

* ΠΛΗΤΕΙΝ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΠΟΛΕΜΟΝ. Dion. Cass.

for

for his endeavours. So that he is not as the Miser who is rich only in his Chests and Granarys, who has riches indeed, but kept for the owner for his hurt: but he is rich towards God; according to the strength of the Scripture Metaphor, he has made the Almighty his debtor, by the expence he has been at in doing good: For God has been pleased to engage that he will repay every thing that is thus devoted to his service. Tho the property is entirely vested in him, tho he might dispose of the riches of the World and divide them as he pleases, tho it would be enough as Lord of the universe for him to command his Stewards to bestow such a Portion upon those that are in want, and sufficient honour to us to act under so great a benefactor, to be the instruments of transmitting his favours to our suffering brethren; nay, tho Humanity, the common sympathy of nature, plead the cause of the afflicted in our bosom, and prompt us to relieve their distresses by the uneasiness we find within ourselves: notwithstanding, I say, this duty is bound upon us on all these accounts, yet the Almighty has been pleased to encourage the practice of this his favourite Virtue, by distinguishing it with peculiar marks of his esteem, allotting it the highest place in the Christian Morality, and entitling it to the greatest Blessings he has to bestow. Well therefore may the charitable Man be styl'd rich towards God, when he is entitled to such compensations of his Charity from him.

Here then it will be easy to collect the particulars of the charitable Man's wisdom into one short view. He discovers

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discovers his good Judgment in framing right apprehensions of these worldly advantages. He wisely considers, that it is impossible to amass together the whole wealth of Nature, and engross fortune, as the covetous Man seems foolishly to propose: he sees that the more he thus treasures up to himself, the more he distresses others who want the circulation of this unoccupied wealth, and therefore when the grievance becomes general, will form to themselves measures of seizing by violence what he, with injustice, detains from them: he sees that it is not only an impossible, but a very useless undertaking, thus to lay up treasure for himself, which wastes by an insensible corruption, almost as fast as it encreases by his industry; for it's observable of most of the good things of life, that they require an immediate use, or else perish by their own strength, pine away for want of being consum'd: and tho others appear to be of a more durable composition, so as to subsist more entire and undiminish'd; yet providence seems to have provided a set of Creatures on purpose, moths, insects, worms, and insensible animals, or else rust and canker, or fermentation to corrupt them, to hasten the ruin of what is thus made useless in Life, to blast the Hopes and steal away the Treasure of the Miser.

But tho it were possible to collect, and practicable to preserve this volatile wealth, yet the charitable Man still discovers his right Judgment, for he sees it is not, in its own intrinsick value, worth the trouble. It is

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not able to make any addition to Life, or produce one Article of Happiness; his Money is not of the more value because taken out of a great Heap; it is not the more pleasure to his Table, that he eats out of a luxuriant Plenty; no length is added to his Life, because he has much goods laid up for many Years, but every thing beyond the conveniences of Life is superfluous and stands for nothing. And therefore he wisely contrives how to make this otherwise useless superfluity turn to some Account to him, not by keeping it in his Chest which has neither hands to defend it, or wisdom to improve it; but by distributing it in works of Charity to his fellow Creatures, who by this means are become his debtors, so that if ever a revolution of Circumstances should happen, they may be able and oblig'd in gratitude to assist and preserve him. He does as it were too transfer his Wealth before him into Heaven; so that what cou'd not promote his Happiness here, will encrease it there, for the Almighty has promis'd an extraordinary Happiness to the charitable beneficent Man.

Thus is the charitable Man wise, he is *wiser* according to those very Characters of wisdom which the covetous Man proposes. If the covetous Man thinks it prudent to *lay up much goods for many years*, the beneficent Man lays up an incorruptible treasure; if the covetous Man thinks it prudent to provide for accidents to come, the beneficent has the best security, who has the whole Number of his Fellow Creatures for his Friends and Assistance. He

is likewise rich towards God, and has the attributes of the Deity himself concern'd for his support.

If therefore the Character of wisdom thus deservedly belongs to those who exercise the common offices of Charity, how much more does it so to those who contribute to the support of benefactions, which relieve the distresses of particular Men, in the most effectual manner, and are at the same time of the greatest benefit to Society, and the publick good. So indeed should all *true* Charity be administer'd with a particular view to the common welfare. And it would be extremely happy, it would be a great encouragement to Charity in general, if they were so directed. But it sometimes happens in publick, and more frequently in private Charities, where the Application of the Gift is left entirely to the Prudence and Honesty of the Receiver, that what was bestow'd with a good design is abused to ill Purposes, to the hurt and disorder of the World, to the encouragement of Idleness and Debauchery, rather than promoting any useful end, so that experience perhaps may teach us at last, that it is as wise to destroy them, as it was at first to institute them. However, it is a peculiar recommendation of the wisdom of this Charity of ours, as well as of those who contribute to it, that it is in so many Respects productive of publick Benefit.

It enlivens and beautifies the face of the World, frees it from blemishes and incumbrances, by collecting together into one place, and removing out of sight, tho not out of mind, all those objects of misery, that

might offend or dispirit us in the prosecution of our affairs. Want and pain are shameless and importunate, things that will be taken notice of, will force the Persons that labour under them into the way of relief; and indeed they have reason to be confident and troublesome to us in claiming that relief, which in such circumstances, they have a strict right to expect. So that we may look upon it as owing in a great measure to such charitable foundations as these, that the afflicted meet us not in every way filling our ears with complaints and embittering our enjoyments, and that this great City is not one general Hospital, and the face of it cover'd with various diseases.

Again, such Charitys as these give the greatest encouragement to the low laborious part of Mankind more cheerfully to face danger, and encounter difficulties, in the useful services we lay upon them. The inferior part of Men are the instruments in the hands of the wealthy and wise, by which they furnish themselves with the conveniencies, comforts, and enjoyments of Life. 'Tis they that plant and sow, reap and build, that improve our domestick riches, and import foreign ones, that furnish us with what we want, as well as defend us in the quiet enjoyment of what we have. So that in the course of such laborious employments, they must be expos'd to an infinite variety of little accidents and calamities, which, upon account of their circumstances, cannot be taken an early care of, and by this means being too long neglected, become dangerous

gerous and desperate. What encouragement then wou'd they have to that daringness and resolution, which gives dispatch to business, what inducement to expose themselves in our service to these mischiefs, unless they were assur'd of some suitable provision made for their comfortable support and effectual recovery? Without this, they would proceed but very slowly and languishingly in the dutys allotted them, fearful of every accident, and terrified with every danger. But on the other hand it must inspire them with the greatest Life and Courage, to see the whole Society they are serving, engag'd for their support, and such a noble Provision as this made for their reception, under the worst that can befall them. Thus the wheels of business move briskly, in spite of all obstructions, and the affairs of this great City proceed with the greatest regularity and expedition.

But farther, another publick Benefit wholly to be ascrib'd to these sort of Charitys is, that by their assistance Numbers of Men are daily sav'd for the service of a Society, and the World in general; they are restor'd from those diseases and complaints, which, unless properly taken care of in this manner would render them for ever useless, continue them lingering in Misery, or else speedily destroy them. What is this therefore but to preserve and encrease the riches, strength and glory of a Community, which always rises and falls in proportion to the Number and Vigour of its inhabitants. So sensible was one of the bravest, and wisest nations among the Antients, of what importance

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tance the Number and Preservation of their Citizens was to publick good, that besides the encouragement they gave to numerous families, they bestowed a publick and lasting honour, a civic Crown, upon those who had rescued a single Citizen from danger.

How much service then must they do a Community, who save by thousands, as their records testify? Permit me to mention another publick Benefit, for which we are indebted to these Charitys, that by means of these, the pains and diseases incident to Human Nature are better understood, a more certain cure and relief for them is found out, and confirm'd by repeated experiments, and skill in Medicine is improv'd for the benefit of all, even those of an ample fortune, much more than it ever was, or could be, before the establishment of these institutions.

The best Physicians will, I believe, authorize me to say, that 'tis folly to think the most ingenious can sit and dictate to Nature, or send out their Schemes and Hypotheses, however rational or consistent, which she shall obey. The only method of correcting her disorders is, with a judicious eye to watch her motions, attend to her complaints, and by a repeated trial of the effect or virtue of different things, discover what will suit her disposition, and assist her own endeavours towards a recovery. Without this, Librarys of Learning will but help us more ingeniously, and according to Art, to destroy. The great use of Books is to help and improve our judgment, and confirm our own obser-

observations by former reports and experiments of others. But, as is commonly said, he that will not thus obey Nature will never govern her.

What a noble Field then do these Charitys prepare, for this useful, this universal knowledge of all Cases? What would rarely fall under one Man's private observation in his separate practice, is here often repeated: Every evil is here submitted to be tried under all its complications, not by a single Man of one sort of Skill, who with the greatest Care and Sagacity might overlook some things material, but by Numbers of Men who excel in their different ways, attend to different things, suffer no important circumstance to escape, but by a joint judgment, ascertain the method of Cure. Thus the poor and diseased are made a Seminary of Learning for the Health of the Rich, and these Charitys, while they properly relieve the most desperate complaints, become at the same time Academics for the improvement of Skill; so that diseases, which in former times were thought desperate, are now, by the Advantage of these institutions, reduc'd into an almost certain and easy Method of cure.

Was I disposed to make the most of the advantages arising from these Charitys, I should mention likewise the publick service they do by being extended even to Forreigners; so that they raise the Character of our Nation, and make us Friends abroad, who will in their turn do *us* good offices in those many concerns, which as a trading community we must have depending among them. This indeed we have not articled or
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contracted with them for, but yet in gratitude they will find themselves oblig'd to it. However, should they be so ungrateful as to neglect us in our distrels, yet we are sure, that by supporting these excellent Charities, we recommend ourselves to his Assistance and Protection, who will certainly *bleſs thoſe that viſit the ſick and needy, and deliver them in the time of trouble.* As the Text ſpeaks, we wiſely become rich towards God, who will ſurely recompenſe us at the reſurrection of the juſt.



men who excel in their different ways, attend to different things, ſuffer no important circumſtance to eſcape, but by a joint judgment certain the method of Cure. Thus the poor and diſtreſſed are made a ſecondary of Learning for the ſake of the Rich, and theſe Charities, while they properly relieve the moſt deſperate complainants, become at the ſame time Academies for the improvement of Skill; ſo that diſeaſes, which in former times were thought deſperate, are now by the Advantage of theſe Inſtitutions, reduced into an almoſt certain and eaſy Method of Cure. Was I diſpoſed to make the moſt of the Advantages ſpring from theſe Charities, I ſhould mention likewiſe the publick ſervice they do by being extended even to Foreigners; ſo that they raiſe the Character of our Nation, and make us Friends abroad, who will in their turn do us good offices in thoſe many concerns, which as a trading Community we muſt have depending among them. This indeed we have not articulated or

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